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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain characteristics of three groups of secondary school students: absentees, check-outs, and nonenrollees. An effort was made to determine the magnitude of the problem, the whereabouts of the nonattenders, and the reasons for their nonattendance. Two sources of data were utilized: (1) personal interviews with students, parents, or neighbors; and (2) data obtained from the cumulative records of the students. Generally, the findings indicated that prediction is difficult because there is no such person as a "typical" school leaver. However, it can be said that the young person who might be identified as dropout-prone is one who: (1) is reading poorly and whose reading is not improving, (2) has a relatively high rate of absenteeism, (3) is more economically deprived than his fellow students, (4) is older than his classmates, (5) is beginning to lose interest in school, and (6) is beginning to receive poor marks. Race and sex did not seem to be significant factors. (Author/PC)

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STUDY OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ABSENTEES AND SCHOOL LEAVERS

An Investigation of Certain Characteristics

of

Absentees and School Leavers

in

Six Senior High Schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District

Conducted in the Fall of 1973

September, 1974

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A REPORT PREPARED BY

Research and Evaluation Branch and Pupil Services and Attendance Branch

of the

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Report No. 343

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the school year 1972-1973, considerable concern was generated over the rate of non-attendance in certain senior high schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District. It was felt that an effort should be made to determine the magnitude of the problem, the whereabouts of the non-attenders, and the reasons for their non-attendance. A study was authorized by the Community Affairs Committee of the Board of Education to investigate the problem of "non-attenders" as well as those who had definitely severed their connection with the educational process, i.e., dropouts.

It was anticipated that the study would generate the following data:

1. The whereabouts and reasons for non-attendance of students who had been absent for extended periods (absentees).

2. The whereabouts and reasons for leaving school of students who checked out of school for any reason, including those who checked out to attend continuation school (check-outs).

3. The whereabouts and reasons for leaving school of students who fail to enroll in September (non-enrollees).

4. How school "persisters" differ from absentees, check-outs, and non-enrollees.

5. Whether any discrimination exists in the treatment of "dropout prone" students.

No information is yet available to compare school persisters with non-attenders nor is any information available concerning the problem of discrimination, if any, which may exist. Once the term "persister" is defined, it is anticipated that the comparison of persisters with non-attenders, check-outs, and non-enrollees may be accomplished, since this is not an impossible task. Any attempt to determine whether or not schools discriminate in their treatment of dropout-prone students will require an evaluation of the administrative and counseling services at each school, and this is obviously not an easy task. However, this study will indicate some school administrative areas that are associated with absentee and dropout problems.

As indicated above, this is a study of three groups of students: absentees, check-outs, and non-enrollees. As the study will show, some may now be classified as "dropouts," although this term is not easy to define. It usually is applied to any young person who is no longer enrolled in any educational process that might lead to a high school diploma.

The term "dropout" often conjures up ideas of delinquency, although this may not be fair to the dropout since he or she may in fact be steadily employed, a housewife, a member of the military service, or

engaged in any number of activities that society finds acceptable or even admirable. As this study will show, few were standing around on street corners.

Researchers have been busy for years trying to find out why students leave school. The student who leaves will indicate that he is bored with school programs and that he wants to get out into the "real" world of adults. The school officials see it as problems of low achievement, low scholastic aptitude, excessive absence, difficulty in reading, low family aspiration, family instability, or poor self control. While some effort in this study will be made to probe the motivation of school leavers or absentees, the principal emphasis will be on information that describes in an objective way, the absentee, check-out, or non-enrollee of the Los Angeles City Schools.

It is anticipated that the knowledge that is gained from the study may assist school administrators to "do something" about the problem of the young person who is not enrolled in school or is frequently absent.

II. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This is a sampling study of students from six senior high schools: Banning (Area A), Francis Polytechnic (Area I), Fremont (Area C), Granada Hills (Area K), Hamilton (Area D), and Roosevelt (Area G). The schools were chosen to meet the following criteria:

1. The racial and ethnic balance should approximate that of the District.

2. The schools should approximate the socio-economic background of the District.

3. The schools should approximate the administrative problems of the District.

4. The schools should be representative of the geographical areas of the District.

Racial and Ethnic Balance

Table 1 indicates how closely the sample approximated the District's racial and ethnic balance in the Fall of 1973, at which time the study was begun. (2)

Socio-Economic Data

There are no hard data to determine how schools in the city rank according to socio-economic background. One rough measure would be the average income of families in the attendance area as recorded for the 1970 census data. The average District family income was $12,439, whereas the average income of the attendance areas of the sample was somewhat

less, at $11,141. However, the income average for the District was weighted upward by two or three schools with attendance areas of rather exceptionally high income.

Administrative Problems

This is truly a nebulous area and cannot be adequately measured. One possible measure would be transiency rates. A school with high transiency would have such problems as added clerical load, classroom turnover, and the difficulty of giving sustained guidance to students who do not remain long in the school. In transiency, there was a small difference between the District and the sample. The school-year transiency rate for the sample of six schools was 54.1 percent, which was slightly higher than that for the District, at 51.9 percent. This would indicate that the six sample schools were probably somewhat above average in administrative problems.

Geographical Areas

It would appear that the six schools selected were representative of the District's geographic areas. Two schools were located in the San Fernando Valley, one school in the District's East side, one school in the central city section, one school in the harbor area, and one school in the West side of the District.

TABLE 1
RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPINGS OF STUDENTS IN SAMPLE SCHOOLS AND IN ALL DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Racial or Ethnic Group	Sample Schools %	All District Schools %
American Indian	0.3	0.2
Asian American	3.5	4.5
Black	26.3	25.3
Spanish Surname	26.5	25.6
All Others	43.4	44.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Students in the Study

The students included in the study, or ex-students as the case may be, were those who (1) failed to enroll as expected for the fall semester, 1973, (2) checked out of school during the first semester, 1973-74, or (3) had sustained periods of absence during the first semester, 1973-74. The names of the students in these categories were provided by school personnel to two Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors. In some instances, the non-enrollees were students who had simply transferred to another school and for whom the cumulative records had not yet been requested. However, all subjects who were initially included in the lists were kept in the study. The reason for this procedure was to have a complete follow-up of all "absent" students, even though the reason for their absence was only the result of the school having incomplete information.

In the interest of consistency, the subjects in this study will henceforth be called "students," even though many became ex-students during the course of the study.

Sources of Data

Two basic sources of data were utilized: (1) personal interviews with students, parents, or neighbors, and (2) data obtained from the cumulative records of the students. The interviews were conducted by two Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors who recorded the information on a printed card (see Exhibit A). Wherever possible the information was obtained from the student or ex-student. If the student could not be found, a parent or relative was interviewed, and if no relative could be found, a neighbor was interviewed. As will be shown, no information of any kind was available for some of the young persons in the study. All interviews were conducted during the fall semester, 1973-74.

The two PSA Counselors conducted a total of 1,032 interviews, which comprised 89 percent of the original sample of 1,163 (see Table 2). In 11 percent of the cases, no one could be found in the neighborhood that knew anything about the student. In the majority of the cases (53 percent), the student himself was interviewed.

The cumulative record data was recorded on a special form by six assistant counselors, one from each of the schools in the study (see Exhibit B). These data were recorded during the spring vacation period 1974. The counselors were instructed to update any information that had been obtained by the Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors.

Table 3 indicates the availability of the cumulative records of the students in the study. Complete records were available for 69 percent of the students, minimum records for 8 percent, and no records for 23 percent. Of the 263 students for whom no records were available, 70 had had their records forwarded as the result of a transfer to a different school, 31 could not be located, and 162 were located. The 31 for whom no information could be found by the PSA Counselors might be classified as "ghosts," since there was no record of them anywhere. It

TABLE 2
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY
PUPIL SERVICES AND ATTENDANCE COUNSELORS

	N*	%
Interview Obtained:		
- With Student	(618)	53.1
- With Parent	(214)	18.4
- With Relative or Neighbor	(130)	11.2
- Interviewee Not Identified	(70)	6.0
Total Interviewed	1032	88.7
No Interview Obtained**	131	11.3
Total	1163	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

**No one was available who knew student.

TABLE 3
AVAILABILITY OF CUMULATIVE RECORDS

	N*	%
Cumulative Record Available	805	69.2
Minimum Record Available** . . .	95	8.2
No Record Available		
Student Not Located . . .	(31)	(2.7)
Student Located	(162)	(13.9)
Cum Forwarded to Different School	(70)	(6.0)
Total-No Record . .	263	22.6
Total	1163	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

**Minimum record - Record contained no test data and no subject marks, or only subject marks for the last semester in school.

is probable that the names of these students were first supplied to the PSA worker in error; i.e., it is doubtful that they should have been included in the study.

The rationale for the inclusion of the 70 "transfer" students is that in most cases, these students made a very slow transfer from one school to another, i.e., they often took an extended school holiday between leaving one school and enrolling in another. This accounts for the fact that in many instances, the request for a cumulative record was considerably delayed, and it accounts for the fact that the students initially were listed as either "non-enrollees" or "absentees."

School of Enrollment

Table 4 lists the schools of enrollment of the 1,163 students in the sample. The largest proportion (24 percent) was from Fremont Senior High School, an inner city school, and the smallest proportion (10 percent) was from Hamilton Senior High School, a West side school. No additional data in the study will be reported by schools, since it was not the purpose of the study to pinpoint problem areas by individual schools, but only to summarize the problems of the District as they were found in a representative sample of schools.

III. FINDINGS

The data in this study will be reported for all students in each of the distributions, and in certain selected distributions the data will also be reported by (1) sex, and by (2) the initial status of the students. The selected distributions were chosen where the addition of information by sex or by the students' initial status was believed to have educational significance.

Sex

As indicated in Table 5, approximately 53 percent of the students in the study were male and 47 percent were female. The noteworthy point in respect to these data is not that the males slightly outnumber the females but that such a large proportion were in fact women. Many in-school and out-of-school programs for dropouts and absentees are designed primarily to assist men rather than women. The fact that many programs are male-centered can be explained to some degree by the relatively poor adjustment that young men make to the out-of-school world. However, it is well to remember that approximately one-half the problem of school leavers and absentees is a feminine one.

A 1968 study of dropouts in the Los Angeles Unified School District found the male/female percentages to be 54 percent and 46 percent,

TABLE 4
SCHOOL OF ENROLLMENT

	N*	%
Banning	214	18.4
Francis Polytechnic	206	17.7
Fremont	282	24.2
Granada Hills . . .	130	11.2
Hamilton	117	10.1
Roosevelt	214	18.4
Total	1163	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

TABLE 5
SEX OF STUDENTS IN SAMPLE

	N*	%
Men	616	53.0
Women . . .	547	47.0
Total	1163	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

respectively. (1) The fact that the 1968 data so closely resemble the 1973 data would indicate that degree of the problem in relation to male/female percentages has changed very little.

Distribution by Initial Status

At the time that each Pupil Services and Attendance Counselor began his investigation of the students, each subject was designated as a non-enrollee, a check-out, or a student with a record of extended absenteeism. Table 6 indicates how many were in each category. Three of the non-enrollees were included in error as they had actually graduated from high school as the result of attending summer school. These three students were not included in any additional data in the study, except in Tables 41, 42, and 43, which include information about the final status of the entire group of 1,163 subjects.

Forty-five percent of the students in the study were "check-outs." Most, but not all, had checked out to enroll in continuation schools. It may be assumed that the majority of these students received some type of school counseling before making a decision to leave regular school. The remaining fifty-five percent were either non-enrollees or absentees.

Most of the non-enrollees and absentees may be presumed to be either dropout or dropout-prone students, and as a combined group, they present serious problems of counseling. Unlike check-outs, they are not available for consultation with the school counselors and, unless they return to school, only out-of-school persons could influence them. It is true that Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors may contact these students, but the present PSA staff is hardly of sufficient size to give them effective counseling, particularly in view of the demands for the services of PSA Supervisors for pupils at lower grade levels.

In the tables dealing with the initial status, the check-outs and non-enrollees students were combined into one category, school leavers, which in each instance, is compared with the category, absentees.

Degree of Attendance Problem of Absentees

At the time each PSA Counselor began his investigation, he noted for each "absentee" the number of days that the student had been absent (see Table 7). The fact that 55 percent had been absent at least 25 days and another 30 percent had been absent from 15 to 24 days indicates that the "absentee" students in this study were not the usual run of casual absentees that a school might expect but comprised a group of students with serious problems of school attendance.

TABLE 6
INITIAL STATUS

	N*	%
School Leavers		
Check-outs	(229)	(19.8)
Non-enrollees	(521)	(44.9)
Total-School Leavers .	750	64.7
Absentees	410	35.3
Total	1160	100.0

*Data available for 99.7%

TABLE 7
DEGREE OF ATTENDANCE PROBLEM OF "ABSENTEES"

	N*	%
5- 9 Days Absence	17	5.2
10-14 Days Absence	30	9.2
15-19 Days Absence	43	13.2
20-24 Days Absence	57	17.6
Absent for 25 Days or More	178	54.8
Total	325	100.0

*Data available for 79.3% of 410 absentees

Racial and Ethnic Background

The PSA Counselors classified each of the students in the study into the same racial and ethnic groupings that were used in the district's 1973 racial and ethnic survey. The distribution of the categories is shown in Table 8.

In this instance, there was a "norm" with which to compare the sample and that was the racial and ethnic distributions of the entire pupil population of the six sample schools as revealed in the Fall, 1973, Racial and Ethnic Survey, Los Angeles Unified School District. (2) From an inspection of the two distributions it can be seen that there are higher proportions of Blacks and students of Spanish Surname in the sample group than there was for all students in the six schools. By contrast, there were fewer Asian-Americans and "Other" students in the sample than in the six school population. The number of American Indians in each group was so small that it would be difficult to make any valid comparison.

"English as a Second Language" Students

Of the students in the study, 5.1 percent were enrolled in "English as a Second Language" classes (See Table 9). This is a slightly larger proportion than the 2.8 percent enrolled in similar classes by all students in the six sample schools. This difference would indicate that ESL students tend to leave school or take long absences in greater numbers than do other students.

Of the 58 ESL students, 57 were also classified as Spanish Surname. Thus, it can be determined that of the 306 Spanish Surname students in the sample, approximately one in five (18.6 percent) were also ESL students.

Socio-Economic Background

The socio-economic background of the families of the students is shown in Table 10. In most cases, the socio-economic status was assigned by the PSA Counselor on the basis of the occupation of the head of the family. The exception was for those families receiving public welfare assistance, in which case the family was placed in the category "public welfare." This scaling is based on the categories of the Alba M. Edwards Scale of Socio-Economic Status.

Examination of Table 10 indicates that 5 percent came from families where the head of the family was a professional or managerial worker, and that 12 percent came from families with a skilled head of family. In the California population of workers (including the unemployed but not those on public welfare), the proportions are approximately 30 percent professional and managerial and 12 percent skilled. (4)

TABLE 8
RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPINGS OF STUDENTS IN THE STUDY
AND ALL STUDENTS IN SAMPLE SCHOOLS

Racial or Ethnic Group	Students in the Study N*	Students in the Study %	All Students in Six Sample Schools N	All Students in Six Sample Schools %
American Indian	6	0.6	55	0.3
Asian-American	17	1.7	646	3.5
Black	372	36.8	4790	26.3
Spanish Surname	306	30.2	4820	26.5
All Others	311	30.7	7908	43.4
	1012	100.0	18219	100.0

*Data available for 87.0%

TABLE 9
"ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE" STUDENTS

	Students in the Study N*	Students in the Study %	All Students in Six Sample Schools N	All Students in Six Sample Schools %
"English as a Second Language" Students	58**	5.1	519	2.8
Other Students	1087	94.9	17700	97.2
Total	1145	100.0	18219	100.0

*Data available for 98.5%

**57 of the 58 ESL students were classified as 'Spanish Surname.'

TABLE 10
SOCIO-ECONOMIC FAMILY BACKGROUND

	N*	%
Professional & Managerial	53	5.2
Skilled	116	11.5
Semi-skilled	457	45.2
Unskilled	229	22.6
Public Welfare	157	15.5
Total	1012	100.0

*Data available for 87.0%

Age Level

The age of the students ranged from 14 to 19, with a median age of 16 years, 10.3 months (see Table 11).

Grade Level

As based on actual subjects completed, the grade levels of the students are shown in Table 12. The median grade level was 11.26 (or approximately the third month of the eleventh grade). With normal progression through high school, the age of students at this grade level is about sixteen years and three months. As shown in Table 10, the actual age level of the students in this study was sixteen years and ten months. By comparison, it may be estimated that the typical study subject was approximately seven months overage for grade.

Number of Siblings and Position in Family

Table 13 presents data for the number of siblings of the subjects in the sample, and Table 14 indicates their position in the family. The median number of siblings was 2.54. The distribution was so obviously skewed toward the smaller family size, that it was deemed advisable to compute the average number of siblings, which was somewhat higher than the median, at 2.97.

The relative position of the subjects in the family is shown in Table 14. In interpreting Table 13, along with Table 14, it should be kept in mind that the larger the family, the greater the probability of a child being the middle child.

TABLE 11
AGE LEVEL

	N*	%
14-05 or Less	1	0.1
14-06 - 14-11	6	0.6
15-00 - 15-05	79	6.8
15-06 - 15-11	130	11.2
16-00 - 16-05	228	19.8
16-06 - 16-11	188	16.3
17-00 - 17-05	197	17.1
17-06 - 17-11	161	14.0
18-00 - 18-05	123	10.6
18-06 - 18-11	28	2.4
19-00 or More	13	1.1
Total	1154	100.0

Median Age = 16-10.3

*Data available for 99.2%

TABLE 12
GRADE LEVEL IN SCHOOL YEARS AND MONTHS

	N*	%
10.0 - 10.4 . . .	231	20.5
10.5 - 10.9 . . .	206	18.3
11.0 - 11.4 . . .	241	21.4
11.5 - 11.9 . . .	155	13.8
12.0 - 12.4 . . .	159	14.1
12.5 - 12.9 . . .	134	11.9
Total	1126	100.0

Median Grade Level = 11.26

*Data available for 96.8%

TABLE 13
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS

	N*	%
None	87	12.6
1 - 2	254	36.7
3 - 4	198	28.6
5 - 6	95	13.7
7 - 8	40	5.8
9 or More . . .	18	2.6
Total	692	100.0

Median Number of Siblings = 2.54
Average Number of Siblings = 2.97

*Data available for 59.6%

TABLE 14
POSITION IN FAMILY

	N*	%
Only Child . . .	87	12.6
Oldest Child . .	154	22.3
Middle Child . .	277	40.1
Youngest Child .	173	25.0
Total	691	100.0

*Data available for 59.4%

Senior High School Course of Study

There was sufficient senior high school course information for approximately two-thirds of the subjects to make a judgment as to what course of study they were following (see Table 15). The noteworthy information to be derived from Table 15 is that 67 per cent of the subjects were not following any consistent course of study. Typically, these students were finding it difficult to adjust to high school and, on their own volition, or on the advice of a counselor, were changing from one course to another, trying to find an educational niche in which they could succeed.

Of some interest is the fact that only 11 percent were pursuing an academic major (which was defined as a course including the high school subjects required by the University of California). The typical dropout or dropout-prone student is seldom to be found following an academic program.

Grade Entered Los Angeles City Schools

The grade level at which the students in the study entered the Los Angeles City Schools was available for 77 percent of the sample, and is shown in Table 16. With approximately 39 percent entering in kindergarten, the median grade level of entrance was relatively low (2.34, or approximately the third month of the second grade). Approximately one-fourth (22.8 percent) had entered the Los Angeles City Schools during senior high school, and an additional 8.2 percent entered during junior high school. Both these last figures may be low estimates. Cumulative records were not available for 263 students, and the lack of records would tend to indicate a lack of history in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

TABLE 15
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY

	N*	%
Academic	84	11.2
Business Education . . .	43	5.8
Art or Music	10	1.4
Home Economics	36	4.8
Industrial Arts	71	9.5
General Non-academic . .	503	67.3
Total	747	100.0

*Data available for 64.2%

TABLE 16
GRADE ENTERED LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

Grade Level	N*	%
Kindergarten	(353)	(39.4)
Grade 1	(84)	(9.4)
Grade 2	(31)	(3.4)
Grade 3	(31)	(3.4)
Grade 4	(32)	(3.6)
Grade 5	(26)	(2.9)
Grade 6	(28)	(3.1)
Total - Elementary	585	65.2
Grade 7	(32)	(3.6)
Grade 8	(35)	(3.9)
Grade 9	(39)	(4.3)
Total - Junior H. S.	106	11.8
Grade 10	(67)	(7.5)
Grade 11	(31)	(3.4)
Grade 12	(13)	(1.5)
Senior High (No Grade Indicated)	(95)	(10.6)
Total - Senior H. S.	206	23.0
Total	897	100.0

Median Grade Level = 2.34

*Data available for 76.9%

As shown in Table 17, the median grade level of district entrance for the school leavers was 4.45, which was considerably higher than that for the absentees, at 0.98. The majority of the latter group had entered the district as kindergarten pupils.

School Months Enrolled in Sample School

Table 18 presents the distribution of the students in the study according to the number of months each had attended one of the sample schools. As in the previous table, no data were available for 263 subjects for whom no cumulative records were located. It may be presumed that this latter group of students had spent little time in the sample schools; otherwise they probably would have had complete cumulative records. The exception to this rule would be the 70 students whose records had been forwarded to a different school.

Of the known group, the median number of school months in the sample school was 8.85, or slightly less than one school year. Approximately one-third (33.5 percent) had spent one semester or less in the sample schools. All too often, these were students who had transferred to a new school, failed to make an adjustment to the strange surroundings, and decided to terminate their education. In a case of this nature, neither the teachers or the counseling staff may be aware that a problem exists, or if they do become aware of the problem, they do not have sufficient time to deal with it.

TABLE 17
GRADE ENTERED LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

	School Leavers	Absentees
N*	603	294
Grade Level	%	%
Kindergarten	(33.2)	(52.0)
Grades 1 - 3	(15.0)	(18.7)
Grades 4 - 6	(9.8)	(9.2)
Total - Elementary	58.0	79.9
Junior High School	13.6	8.2
Senior High School	28.4	11.9
Total	100.0	100.0
Median Grade Levels =	4.45	0.98

*Data available for 80.4% of school leavers and 717% of absentees

TABLE 18
SCHOOL MONTHS ENROLLED IN SAMPLE SCHOOL

Time in School	N*	%
None (Never Enrolled) .	69	7.7
1 - 5 Months	231	25.8
6 - 10 Months	192	21.4
11 - 15 Months	149	16.6
16 - 20 Months	107	11.9
21 - 25 Months	93	10.4
26 - 30 Months	47	5.2
31 - 35 Months	7	0.8
36 - 40 Months	2	0.2
Total	897	100.0

Median Months in Last School = 8.85

*Data available for 76.9% (No cumulative records available for 263 students)

TABLE 19
SCHOOL MONTHS ENROLLED IN SAMPLE SCHOOL
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

	School Leavers	Absentees
N*	605	292
Time in School	%	%
None (Never Enrolled) .	9.6	3.8
1 - 5 Months	26.1	25.0
6 - 10 Months	19.0	26.4
11 - 15 Months	16.0	17.8
16 - 20 Months	11.1	13.7
21 - 25 Months	11.1	8.9
26 - 30 Months	6.1	3.4
31 - 35 Months	0.7	1.0
36 - 40 Months	0.3	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Median Months in Last School	8.76	9.01

*Data available for 80.7% of school leavers and 71.2% of absentees

Table 19 on page 17 reveals that there was very little difference in time spent in the sample schools between the absentees and the school leavers. A typical absentee had spent 9.01 months in a sample school and the typical school leaver had spent 8.76 months.

Intelligence Quotient

The median intelligence quotient of the students for whom I.Q. data was available was 88.9 (see Table 20). I.Q. testing became optional in the district beginning in the school year 1973-1974; hence, there are no comparable 1973 senior high school data. In the fall of 1972, the median I.Q. of the district's twelfth grade was 96, which was approximately seven I.Q. points higher than that of the study group. (3)

Table 21 gives the I.Q. distributions according to the students' initial status. The median I.Q. of the school leavers (at 90.5) was somewhat higher than that of the absentees (at 86.9). This finding is somewhat surprising, considering the fact that the leavers included most of those who had definitely left school, while the absentees were still considered as part of the school's enrollment.

Latest Reading Score

The last reading score on a standardized test listed on the cumulative record for each student is presented as a stanine distribution in Table 22. The median reading percentile of the entire sample was 14.8. In the fall of 1973, the median reading percentile of the entire twelfth-grade class was 42, which would indicate a major difference in reading ability between the typical student in the sample and his classmates. (3)

TABLE 20
INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Stanine	I. Q. Range	N*	%
9	129+	10	1.6
8	121 - 128	11	1.8
7	113 - 120	36	5.7
6	105 - 112	46	7.3
5	97 - 104	90	14.3
4	89 - 96	127	20.2
3	81 - 88	124	19.7
2	73 - 80	126	20.0
1	72-	59	9.4
	Total	629	100.0

Median I.Q. = 88.9

*Data available for 54.1%

TABLE 21
INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

Stanine	I. Q. Range	School Leavers %	Absentees %
	N*	390	292
9	129+	1.8	1.3
8	121 - 128	2.6	0.4
7	113 - 120	6.7	4.2
6	105 - 112	10.0	2.9
5	97 - 104	15.6	12.1
4	89 - 96	17.7	24.3
3	81 - 88	17.4	23.4
2	73 - 80	18.5	22.6
1	72-	9.7	8.8
	Total	100.0	100.0
Median I. Q.		90.5	86.9

*Data available for 52.0% of school leavers and 58.3% of absentees

TABLE 22
LATEST READING SCORES

Stanine	Percentile Range	N*	%
9	97 - 100	4	0.6
8	90 - 96	9	1.3
7	78 - 89	23	3.2
6	61 - 77	41	5.8
5	41 - 60	86	12.2
4	24 - 40	92	13.0
3	12 - 23	136	19.2
2	5 - 11	126	17.8
1	1 - 4	190	26.9
	Total	707	100.0

Median Reading Percentile = 14.8

*Data available for 60.8%

Approximately 45 percent of the group were having serious reading problems as indicated by the fact that their reading scores placed them in either stanine 1 or 2.

A rather rough comparison can be made of the I.Q. level and the reading level of the study group. The I.Q. median fell within the fourth stanine, whereas the reading percentile fell within the third stanine. It would appear that as a group, these students were reading somewhat below their scholastic capacity (as measured by I.Q.).

The median reading percentile of the school leavers was 16.5 as contrasted with 12.5 for the absentees (see Table 23). Almost one-half of the latter group (48.2 percent) had reading scores at the level of stanine 1 or 2.

Elementary School Reading Score

A distribution of the elementary school reading scores of the students in the sample is shown in Table 24. The median reading percentile was 16.3 which was only slightly higher than the median percentile of 14.8 obtained when they were in secondary school (see Table 22).

A large proportion of the students in this study were in the sixth grade in the fall of 1968, at which time the median percentile of the entire B - 6 class was 24, which compares with 16 for the sample. The relatively low percentile for the entire class was obtained on the Stanford Reading Test (Intermediate II). During the period that the state mandated the Stanford test for the sixth grade, most districts in California (including Los Angeles) had lower reading scores than they ever have had before or since.

The fact that the Stanford test apparently presented such difficulty (in terms of its norms) is probably the principal reason why there was so little difference between elementary and secondary in the reading scores of the students in the sample. At the secondary level, the students usually had scores on either the California Test of Basic Skills or the Iowa Tests of Educational Development. Most studies of dropouts or dropout-prone students had found a significant drop in reading scores from elementary to secondary, and the fact that this decline was not found in this study may be due entirely to not having available reading scores on equivalent tests.

Not having equivalent scores at the elementary level also would make it difficult from this study to conclude that poor reading in the lower grades is a good predictor of later school alienation. However, most studies of dropouts have found this to be the case.

TABLE 23
LATEST READING SCORES
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

Stanine	Percentile Range	School Leavers %	Absentees %
	N*	437	270
9	97 - 100	0.9	0.0
8	90 - 96	1.6	0.7
7	78 - 39	3.4	3.0
6	61 - 77	7.3	3.3
5	41 - 60	13.3	10.4
4	24 - 40	13.3	12.6
3	12 - 23	17.6	21.8
2	5 - 11	17.9	17.8
1	1 - 4	24.7	30.4
	Total	100.0	100.0
Median Reading Percentile		16.5	12.5

*Data available for 58.3% of school leavers and 65.9% of absentees

TABLE 24
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READING SCORES

Stanine	Percentile Range	N*	%
9	97 - 100	8	1.4
8	90 - 96	9	1.6
7	78 - 89	14	2.5
6	61 - 77	33	5.9
5	41 - 60	51	9.1
4	24 - 40	101	17.9
3	12 - 23	108	19.2
2	5 - 11	128	22.8
1	1 - 4	111	19.6
	Total	563	100.0

Median Reading Percentile = 16.3

*Data available for 48.4%

As in secondary school, the school leavers were performing at a higher level in elementary school than were the absentees (see Table 25).

Subject Marks in Last Complete Year in School

During the last complete year in school, the students in this sample had hardly made a record of outstanding subject achievement (see Table 26). The total group had a median grade point average of 1.14 (or the rough equivalent of a D). Approximately one in eight (12.2 percent) had obtained no grade above "F" and another 13 percent (with grade point averages between 0.01 and 0.49) had only a smattering of D's to show against a preponderance of F's.

While low grades may not be a "cause" of students leaving school, it is often the precipitant that makes up the mind of the student to leave school. The prospect of taking all or nearly all the subjects over again that had been taken the previous semester is perhaps the one most discouraging factor in the decision to continue or not continue in a regular school.

As shown in Table 27, the median grade point average of the absentees, at 1.25, was somewhat higher than that of the school leavers, at 1.08. This is in contrast to the fact that the typical absentee did less well on the "standardized" tests, scholastic capacity and reading.

TABLE 25
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READING SCORES
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

Stanine	Percentile Range	School Leavers	Absentees
	N*	342	224
		%	%
9	97 - 100	2.1	0.4
8	90 - 96	2.1	0.9
7	78 - 89	2.3	2.7
6	61 - 77	7.0	4.1
5	41 - 60	10.8	6.8
4	24 - 40	16.9	19.0
3	12 - 23	17.3	22.2
2	5 - 11	22.2	23.5
1	1 - 4	19.3	20.4
	Total	100.0	100.0
Median Reading Percentile		17.4	14.8

*Data available for 45.6% of school leavers and 53 9% of absentees

TABLE 26
SUBJECT MARKS IN LAST COMPLETE YEAR IN SCHOOL

Grade-Point Average*	Equivalent Mark	N**	%
3.50 - 4.00	A -	3	0.3
3.00 - 3.49	B +	23	2.8
2.50 - 2.99	B -	40	4.8
2.00 - 2.49	C +	112	13.3
1.50 - 1.99	C -	124	14.8
1.00 - 1.49	D +	178	21.2
0.50 - 0.49	D -	148	17.6
0.01 - 0.49	F +	109	13.0
0.00	F	102	12.2
	Total	839	100.0

Median Grade-Point Average = 1.14 or D +

*Grade Points: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0

**Data available for 72.1%

TABLE 27
SUBJECT MARKS IN LAST COMPLETE YEAR IN SCHOOL
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

		School Leavers	Absentees
	N*	544	295
Grade-Point Average**	Equivalent Mark	%	%
3.50 - 4.00	A -	0.4	0.4
3.00 - 3.49	B +	3.0	2.4
2.50 - 2.99	B -	4.2	5.7
2.00 - 2.49	C +	12.8	14.2
1.50 - 1.99	C -	13.6	17.0
1.00 - 1.49	D +	19.7	24.1
0.50 - 0.99	D -	18.3	16.2
0.01 - 0.49	F +	14.0	11.2
0.00	F	14.0	8.8
	Total	100.0	100.0

Median Grade-Point Average = 1.08 or D+ 1.25 or D+

*Data available for 72.5% of school leavers and 72.0% of absentees

**Grade Points: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0

Seventh-Grade Subject Marks

As shown in Table 28, the students in this study were essentially "C" students while in the seventh grade, having a median grade point average of 1.83. This grade point average was considerably higher than the GPA of 1.14 obtained in the last complete year in school.

At the seventh-grade level, there was little difference between the school leavers and the absentees (see Table 29). The median grade point average of the former was 1.84 and that of the latter 1.80.

Marks in Work Habits and Cooperation for Last Complete Year in School

The marks that the students in the study received in work habits and cooperation were combined to obtain a grade point average using the formula shown in the footnote to Table 30. For the last complete year in school, the median grade point average was 0.81, which was slightly below a mark of "satisfactory."

TABLE 28
SEVENTH-GRADE SUBJECT MARKS

Grade-Point Average*	Equivalent Mark	N**	%
3.50 - 4.00	A -	4	0.5
3.00 - 3.49	B +	34	4.8
2.50 - 2.99	B -	89	12.5
2.00 - 2.49	C +	170	23.8
1.50 - 1.99	C -	185	25.9
1.00 - 1.49	D +	158	22.2
0.50 - 0.99	D -	54	7.6
0.01 - 0.49	F +	14	2.0
0.00	F	5	0.7
	Total	713	100.0

Median Grade-Point Average = 1.83 or C -

*Grade Points: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0

**Data available for 61.3%

TABLE 29
SEVENTH-GRADE SUBJECT MARKS
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

Grade-Point Average**	Equivalent Mark	School Leavers	Absentees
	N*	443	270
		%	%
3.50 - 4.00	A -	0.4	0.8
3.00 - 3.49	B +	5.2	4.1
2.50 - 2.99	B -	12.2	12.9
2.00 - 2.44	C +	24.1	23.3
1.50 - 1.99	C -	27.4	23.7
1.00 - 1.49	D +	20.8	24.5
0.50 - 0.99	D -	7.7	7.4
0.01 - 0.49	F +	1.8	2.2
0.00	F	0.4	1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0
Median Grade-Point Average		1.84 or C-	1.80 or C-

*Data available for 59.1% of school leavers and 65.9% of absentees

**Grade Points: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0

TABLE 30
MARKS IN WORK HABITS AND COOPERATION
FOR LAST COMPLETE YEAR IN SCHOOL

Grade-Point Average*	Equivalent Mark	N**	%
1.75 - 2.00	E -	32	4.1
1.50 - 1.74	E -	48	6.1
1.25 - 1.49	S +	63	8.1
1.00 - 1.24	S +	137	17.6
0.75 - 0.99	S -	145	18.6
0.50 - 0.74	S -	141	18.1
0.25 - 0.49	U +	129	16.6
0.01 - 0.24	U +	53	6.8
0.00	U	31	4.0
	Total	779	100.0
Median Grade-Point Average		0.81 or S -	

*Grade Points: E (Excellent) = 2, S (Satisfactory) = 1, U (Unsatisfactory) = 0

**Data available for 67.0%

As in the case of subjects marks, the typical absentee was making slightly higher marks in work habits and cooperation than the typical school leaver. The former group had a median grade point average of 0.89 and the latter group 0.79 (see Table 31).

Marks in Work Habits and Cooperation in the Seventh Grade

Table 32 shows the distributions of the students according to their marks in work habits and cooperation when they were in the seventh grade. In general, the marks were somewhat higher than they were for the last complete year of school. The grade point average was 1.03 in the seventh grade which compares favorably with 0.81 for the last complete year in school. At the seventh grade level, there was virtually no difference between the leavers and the absentees in respect to work habits and cooperation (see Table 33).

TABLE 31
MARKS IN WORK HABITS AND COOPERATION
FOR LAST COMPLETE YEAR IN SCHOOL
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

Grade-Point Average**	Equivalent Mark	School Leavers	Absentees
	N*	490	289
		%	%
1.75 - 2.00	E -	4.9	2.8
1.50 - 1.74	E -	6.3	5.9
1.25 - 1.49	S +	8.2	8.0
1.00 - 1.24	S +	16.3	19.7
0.75 - 0.99	S -	17.1	21.1
0.50 - 0.74	S -	20.6	13.8
0.25 - 0.49	U +	15.1	19.0
0.01 - 0.24	U +	7.2	6.2
0.00	U	4.3	3.5
	Total	100.0	100.0
Median Grade-Point Average		0.79 or S-	0.89 or S-

*Data available for 65.3% of school leavers and 70.5% of absentees

**Grade Points: E = 2, S = 1, U = 0

TABLE 32
MARKS IN WORK HABITS AND COOPERATION IN THE SEVENTH GRADE

Grade-Point Average*	Equivalent Mark	N**	%
1.75 - 2.00	E -	33	5.1
1.50 - 1.74	E -	67	10.3
1.25 - 1.49	S +	95	14.6
1.00 - 1.24	S +	149	23.0
0.75 - 0.99	S -	128	19.7
0.50 - 0.74	S -	107	16.5
0.25 - 0.49	U +	49	7.6
0.01 - 0.24	U +	19	2.9
0.00	U	2	0.3
	Total	649	100.0

Median Grade Point Average = 1.03 or S +

*Grade Points: E (Excellent) = 2, S (Satisfactory) = 1, U (Unsatisfactory) = 0

**Data available for 55.8%

TABLE 33
MARKS IN WORK HABITS AND COOPERATION IN THE SEVENTH GRADE ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

		School Leavers	Absentees
	N*	398	251
Grade-Point Average**	Equivalent Mark	%	%
1.75 - 2.00	E -	5.8	4.0
1.50 - 1.74	E -	9.8	11.2
1.25 - 1.49	S +	13.8	15.9
1.00 - 1.24	S +	23.1	22.7
0.75 - 0.99	S -	20.1	19.1
0.50 - 0.74	S -	15.6	17.9
0.25 - 0.49	U +	9.3	4.8
0.01 - 0.24	U +	2.0	4.4
0.00	U	0.5	0.0
	Total	100.0	100.0

Median Grade Point Average = 1.03 or S + 1.04 or S +

*Data available for 53.1% of school leavers and 61.2% of absentees

**Grade Points: E = 2, S = 1, U = 0

Reasons for Leaving/or Non-Attendance in/School

There were 17 possible reasons for leaving school or poor attendance printed on the form used by the PSA Counselors, and each worker was permitted to check up to three reasons for each student interviewed. Table 34 presents the rank order of the reasons according to the number checked. The five principal reasons checked were: (1) no interest in school, (2) academic failure, (3) health problems, (4) reading deficiency, and (5) home problems.

Table 35 compares the reasons checked for the school leavers with those of the absentees. Of the five principal reasons, "no interest in school" was the only one in which the leavers exceeded the absentees.

TABLE 34
REASONS FOR LEAVING/OR NON-ATTENDANCE IN/SCHOOL
(Reasons Checked on the Form by PSA Counselors)

Rank Order		N*	%
1.	No Interest in School. . . .	334	32.2
2.	Academic Failure	290	27.9
3.	Health Problems	164	15.8
4.	Reading Deficiency	153	14.7
5.	Home Problems.	138	13.3
6.	Conflict with School Personnel	103	9.9
7.	Conflict with Pupils	78	7.5
8.	Seek Employment.	76	7.3
9.	School Behavior.	53	5.1
10.	18 Years or More	53	5.1
11.	Family Finances	50	4.8
12.	Enter Military Service . . .	43	4.1
13.	Marriage	43	4.1
14.	Pregnancy	35	3.4
15.	Need of Clothing, etc. . . .	24	2.3
16.	Juvenile Court Placement . .	21	2.0
17.	Enrolled in Technical School	5	0.5
	Total of Responses**	1663	160.0
	Number of Students**	1038	

*Data available for 89.3%

**PSA Counselor was permitted to check more than one response; hence, percentage exceeds 100.

TABLE 35
REASONS FOR LEAVING/OR NON-ATTENDANCE IN/SCHOOL
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS
(Reasons Checked on the Form by PSA Counselors)

	School Leavers	Absentees
Number of Students*	640	398
	%	%
No Interest in School	34.7	28.1
Academic Failure	23.1	35.7
Health Problems	9.1	26.6
Reading Deficiency	10.6	21.4
Home Problems	10.9	17.1
Conflict with School Personnel	6.3	15.8
Conflict with Pupils	6.1	9.8
Seek Employment	9.2	4.3
School Behavior	4.4	6.3
18 Years or More	7.0	2.0
Family Finances	5.0	4.5
Enter Military Services	5.9	1.3
Marriage	5.9	1.3
Pregnancy	5.0	0.7
Need of Clothing	1.3	4.0
Juvenile Court Placement	2.5	1.3
Enrolled in Technical School	0.8	0.0
Total**	147.8	180.2
Number of Responses**	946	717

*Data available for 86.5% of school leavers and 67.8% of absentees

**PSA Counselor was permitted to check more than one response; hence, percentage exceeds 100.

Table 36 compares the reasons for leaving according to sex. Of the five principal reasons, "no interest in school," "academic failure," and "reading deficiency" were more important reasons for men than women, whereas "health" and "home" problems were more important reasons for women.

The form included an "other" option, after which the PSA Counselor could write a reason not printed on the form. The written-in reasons are presented in Table 37. The reader should be cautioned against comparing the relatively low frequencies in Table 37 with those of the previous three tables. The printed reasons were much more likely to be checked than would be any reasons volunteered by the PSA Counselor.

TABLE 36
REASONS FOR LEAVING/OR NON-ATTENDANCE IN/SCHOOL
ACCORDING TO SEX
(Reasons Checked on the Form by PSA Counselors)

	Men	Women
Number of Students*	553	485
	%	%
No Interest in School	33.6	30.5
Academic Failure	31.8	23.5
Health Problems	11.6	20.6
Reading Deficiency	15.9	13.4
Home Problems	10.8	16.1
Conflict with School Personnel	11.0	8.7
Conflict with Pupils	8.3	6.6
Seek Employment	8.3	6.2
School Behavior	5.6	4.5
18 Years or More	5.6	4.5
Family Finances	5.1	4.5
Enter Military Service	7.4	0.4
Marriage	1.8	6.8
Pregnancy	- -	7.2
Need of Clothing, etc.	1.4	3.3
Juvenile Court Placement	3.6	0.2
Enrolled in Technical School	0.2	0.8
Total**	162.0	157.8
Number of Responses**	897	766

*Data available for 89.7% of the men and 88.7% of the women

**PSA Counselor was permitted to check more than one response; hence, percentage exceeds 100.

TABLE 37
REASONS FOR LEAVING/OR NON-ATTENDANCE IN/SCHOOL
(Reasons Written in by PSA Counselors)

Rank Order		N*	%
1.	Lacked Small Number of Credits for Graduation	24	2.3
2.	Moving from Area	22	2.1
3.	Didn't Like Way School Was Operated	21	2.0
4.	Gang Activities	15	1.5
5.	Peer Pressure	8	0.8
6.	Babysitting Problems	6	0.6
7.	Needed at Home	6	0.6
8.	Late Enrollment-Refused Admission	4	0.4
9.	Push-out	4	0.1
10.	Absent Because of Trip	1	0.1
11.	"Other" Was Checked, but No Written Reason Was Given	185	17.8
	Total of Responses**	296	28.3
	Number of Students**	1038	

*The total "Other" and written responses was 295 which was 26.6% of the 1038 students for whom any response was either checked or written.

Future Plans

As the result of interviews with the students, parents, or relatives, the PSA Counselor was able to determine the future plans of approximately 80 percent of the students in the study. As revealed in Table 38, approximately 47 percent planned to return to school. Another 22 percent were in limbo, having no definite plans.

Table 39 indicates that approximately 35 percent of the school leavers planned to return to school and 36 percent of the absentees did not have any plans to return to school. This would indicate that the initial status of these students was somewhat different than their final status, and this will be shown more definitely in Table 42.

More women than men planned to return to school and more women than men also fell into the category of "Don't know" (see Table 40).

TABLE 38
FUTURE PLANS

Rank Order		N*	%
1.	Return to School	437	46.7
2.	Don't Know	201	21.5
3.	Seek Employment	78	8.4
4.	Continue Employment . .	48	5.1
5.	Enter Military Service .	43	4.6
6.	Enter Technical School .	29	3.1
	Other Plans	99	10.6
	Total	935	100.0

*Data available for 30.4%

TABLE 39
FUTURE PLANS
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

	School Leavers	Absentees
N*	560	375
	%	%
Return to School	35.0	64.3
Don't Know	26.4	14.1
Seek Employment	10.7	4.8
Continue Employment	6.8	2.7
Enter Military Service	5.7	2.9
Enter Technical School	4.3	1.3
Other Plans	11.1	9.9
Total	100.0	100.0

*Data available for 74.7% of school leavers and 91.5% of absentees

TABLE 40
FUTURE PLANS
ACCORDING TO SEX

	Men	Women
N*	497	438
	%	%
Return to School	42.5	51.6
Don't Know	19.9	23.3
Seek Employment	9.5	7.1
Continue Employment	4.8	5.5
Enter Military Service	7.6	1.1
Enter Technical School	4.2	1.8
Other Plans	11.5	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0

*Data available for 80.7% of the men and 80.1% of the women.

TABLE 41
STATUS AS OF SPRING VACATION, 1974

	N*	%
Graduated from High School		
From Regular Senior High School	(9)	(0.7)
From Adult School	(2)	(0.2)
Total - Graduated from High School	11	0.9
Enrolled in Regular Senior High School		
Continuous Enrollment - Same School	(282)	(24.3)
Returned to School - February 1974	(15)	(1.3)
Different School in Los Angeles District	(74)	(6.4)
Non-District School	(18)	(1.5)
Total - Enrolled in Regular Senior H.S.	389	33.5
Enrolled in Continuation School		
Not Employed	(106)	(9.1)
Employed part- or full-time	(42)	(3.6)
Total - Enrolled in Continuation Schools	148	12.7
Enrolled in Adult School		
Not Employed	(25)	(2.2)
Employed part- or full-time	(12)	(1.0)
Total - Enrolled in Adult Schools	37	3.2
Enrolled in Other Schools		
District Occupational Centers	(35)	(3.0)
Private Trade or Technical Schools	(11)	(0.9)
Job Corps	(10)	(0.9)
Total - Enrolled in Other Schools	56	4.8
Employed		
Full-time	(53)	(4.6)
Part-time	(32)	(2.7)
Total - Employed	85	7.3
Moved - No Cumulative Record Requested		
To Different Section of State or Nation	(37)	(3.2)
To Foreign Country**	(35)	(3.0)
Runaway - Destination Unknown	(10)	(0.9)
Unable to Locate - No Knowledge	(111)	(9.5)
Total - Moved - No Cum Requested	193	16.6
Other		
Military Services	(32)	(2.7)
Homemaker	(24)	(2.1)
Pregnant - Not Enrolled in "Cyesis" School	(12)	(1.0)
Seeking Employment	(87)	(7.5)
Court Placement	(14)	(1.2)
Doing Nothing in Particular	(74)	(6.4)
Deceased	(1)	(0.1)
Total - Other	244	21.0
Total	1163	100.0

*Data available for 100% **34 were reported to have moved to Mexico.

Status as of Spring Vacation, 1974

The status of each of the 1,163 students in the study was determined as of the spring vacation period, 1974, and the complete breakdown of this status is presented in Table 41 (on page 34). This final status was determined by a synthesis of the information supplied by the PSA Counselor and by the senior high school counselor who examined the cumulative records.

Approximately 34 percent were still enrolled in senior high school, 16 percent were enrolled in either continuation or adult school, and 1 percent had graduated from senior high school. The graduates had received their diploma from attending regular school or adult school, but at the time of spring vacation, none had received a diploma from continuation school.

Seven percent of the students in the study were employed, 17 percent had moved but had apparently not enrolled in another school, and 21 percent were in various other categories.

Of the school leavers, 14 percent were back in school at spring vacation time, 18 percent were enrolled in continuation school, and 4 percent in adult school (see Table 42 below). Of the absentees, 31 percent had left regular senior high school by the spring vacation period.

As shown in Table 43 (on page 36), there was surprisingly little difference between men and women in the final status of the students.

TABLE 42
STATUS AS OF SPRING VACATION, 1974
ACCORDING TO INITIAL STATUS

	School Leavers	Absentees
N*	753	410
	%	%
Graduated from High School	1.3	0.2
Enrolled in Senior High School	14.1	69.0
Enrolled in Continuation School	17.7	3.7
Enrolled in Adult School	4.0	1.7
Enrolled in Other Schools	5.7	3.2
Employed	9.7	2.9
Moved - No Cumulative Record Requested	22.4	5.9
Other	25.1	13.4
Total	100.0	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

TABLE 43
STATUS AS OF SPRING VACATION, 1974
ACCORDING TO SEX

	Men	Women
N*	616	547
	%	%
Graduated from High School	1.1	0.7
Enrolled in Senior High School	32.1	34.9
Enrolled in Continuation School . . .	13.0	12.4
Enrolled in Adult School	3.4	2.9
Enrolled in Other Schools	4.7	5.0
Employed	8.8	5.7
Moved - No Cumulative Record Requested	16.4	17.6
Other	20.5	20.8
Total	100.0	100.0

*Data available for 100.0%

IV. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The Dropout-Prone Student

Much of the literature dealing with the school leaver concerns itself with his or her identification at an early age at a time when there is still time to "do something" about the problem in terms of a counseling program, a special school program, and the like. This study has indicated that if one were seeking perfection in this type of prediction, one would have a frustrating experience, since there simply is no such person as a "typical" school leaver. The school leaver comes from all levels of abilities and from all types of backgrounds.

However, if one is willing to settle for less than perfection in such a prediction, it can be said that the young person who might be identified as dropout-prone is one who (1) is reading poorly and whose reading is not improving, (2) has a relatively high rate of absenteeism, (3) is more economically deprived than his fellow students, (4) is older than his classmates, (5) is beginning to lose interest in school, and (6) is beginning to receive poor marks in school subjects, work habits, and

cooperation. The student's skin could be just about any color, and the student is about as likely to be a girl as a boy.

If the student is Black, he is more likely to be enrolled in an all-Black school, and if he is Spanish Surnamed, he is more likely to be enrolled in a school where all the students have similar names. It may not be that this is a causal relationship, since schools with predominantly minority enrollments also are usually located in neighborhoods of families with low socio-economic background, and students from poor families, regardless of color, tend to leave school earlier than students from more affluent families.

Regardless of the method used, the identification of drop-out prone students presents serious problems of educational practice. The labeling of any student, whether it be "mentally retarded," "low achiever," "maladjusted," or "dropout-prone" tends to be self-fulfilling. Once a student is treated differently from others, particularly if he is considered as some sort of problem student, he or she often fulfills that expectation by becoming just what he has been labeled.

Reading and the School Leaver

The fact that early school leavers are nearly always poor readers has been the constant element noticed in all studies in this area. Their poor reading achievement is especially a handicap in senior high school subjects, most of which require extensive independent reading, with no special guidance from the teacher. Nothing will be said here about how to turn a poor reader into a good one, but some comment about the relationship of reading to the home background of the students in the study is appropriate.

One in 20 of the students in the study were in classes for "English as a Second Language," indicating that they were much more competent in another language - usually Spanish - than they were in English. It is not known how many others found English a difficult language because of coming from families with a different language background, but it can be estimated that their numbers were substantial. How school personnel can compensate for this disability in English is not quite clear, but there can be no denial that it is a serious problem.

Many of the students with this learning disability are natives of Mexico, and some return to that country after a period of time in this country. The fact that they leave the United States tends to exaggerate the dropout rates in schools which have these students. In very few instances is anything ever heard again about an emigrant to Mexico, or for that matter, of an emigrant to any foreign country.

High School Graduation and Out-of-School Adjustment

There are some educators who say that it is unrealistic to insist that all should graduate from high school, and it would be better to let those who wish to leave school do so to find employment, become

homemakers, or pursue some other activity. Those who take this view are never quite certain at what age this school leaving should be permitted to take place. For example, nearly everyone would agree that in a highly industrialized society a thirteen- or fourteen-year old is not likely to find an economically useful or socially acceptable place in the life of the country. But the fact is that students of older ages also find it difficult to find a place in the adult world. Whether the reasons for doing so are valid or not, most employers use a high school diploma as a screening device, and the young person without it finds his employment possibilities greatly limited.

High school graduation and compulsory education are closely related. If a student is required to attend school through his eighteenth birthday, he usually is very close to high school graduation, and is likely to continue to the point of receiving a diploma. But most school personnel who work with compulsory education laws know that the pressure to leave school begins about two years before the actual limit. Thus, an eighteen year old limit means in practice that the pressure to leave school begins at about age 16. In this study, the median age of the students was 16 years and 10 months. If the compulsory age limit were dropped to 14 or 15, as some would advocate, then the pressure to leave school would begin at about ages 12 or 13, and no one in education can be found who is willing to advocate this early a school leaving.

The fact that nearly one-half the school leavers or non-attenders are young women has been used in the past to show that the fact of leaving school need not cause society any serious problems. It is true that in the past most young women school leavers have usually made an acceptable adjustment in society. Usually this has been the result of an early marriage or the acceptance of unskilled employment. But it is questionable that young women school leavers will find it as easy in the future to work out an acceptable pattern of activity. Already, early marriage is on its way out, and to some degree so is the life-goal of "homemaker." In increasing numbers, young women who leave school early will encounter the same problems as those of young men and will find it just as difficult to solve them.

The Teacher and the School Leaver

At the heart of most problems of school leaving is the relationship of the student and the teacher. As many moderate and slow achievers progress through school, they find a changing relationship with their teachers. Most primary teachers tend to have a reasonable empathy with students in these categories and seldom make it difficult for the student to achieve some measure of success. If nothing else, they are usually "passed" from grade to grade along with their classmates. It is usually in the upper grades of elementary school or in junior high school that a student begins to encounter the problem of school failure, and with it comes the first signs of alienation from school, as indicated by poor attendance, lack of interest, resentment of school authority, and the like.

Finally comes senior high school, where many more teachers believe in upholding "standards," with the result that many students with patterns

of low or moderate achievement, compounded perhaps by a record of poor attendance, find that at the end of a particular semester they have received four or five "Fail" grades. Each teacher can probably justify his or her grade, but the total effect is calamitous. The student is faced with repeating all or nearly all the subjects that had been taken. When the student weights the choice between such a repetition and leaving school, he quite often makes the choice for separation.

The Counselor and the School Leaver

An important finding of this study is that the typical school leaver was enrolled in the last senior high school of attendance less than one school year, and many of those who had been enrolled for a longer period were September non-enrollees of their junior or senior high school year. A small number of the students in the study were non-enrollees of the tenth grade, i.e., they had never enrolled in any senior high school.

The September non-enrollee presents an extremely difficult problem of counseling, since for these students in-school counseling becomes an impossibility. The problem of counseling the student is left entirely to the Pupil Services and Attendance Counselor, who may not be able to find the student, or who, because of restricted time available for each student, may be able to do little more than present the out-of-school student with a list of optional actions.

The student who is enrolled and who checks out of a regular senior high school is usually available for counseling, but since many of them have been in school for only a short time, there is often little or no past relationship between the counselor and the counselee which the former can draw upon to give effective advice. In many cases, the decision to leave school may come as a complete surprise to both teachers and counselors, with no possibility of giving any anticipatory support to the student.

Most students under 18 years of age who check out of a regular senior high school are transferred to a continuation school. But in this study, there were 521 non-enrollees as compared with 229 check-outs, and it can be readily seen that the possibility of counseling students into continuation schools is usually not an available option. It should be pointed out that this study, by covering only the fall semester, weighted the numbers in favor of non-enrollees. Non-enrollees are a phenomenon of September only, whereas students check out of school during the entire school year. If the study had continued for the full school year, the proportions would have tended to equalize.

The absentee presents a special problem in counseling. As this study shows, many students who were listed as absentees did not return to school, and in these instances, the out-of-school problems of counseling prevailed in much the same manner as they did for the non-enrollees. If a student came back to school after a long absence, he or she was usually far behind in all classroom subjects. With the prospect of

facing a report card filled with D's, Fail's, and Incompletes, the returning absentee is clearly "dropout-prone," and is in need of some serious counseling.

One factor which compounds the problem of counseling is the availability of school records. If school records have any value, they should be useful as background information in counseling an actual or potential school leaver. Excluding the students whose records were forwarded to another school, 193 students in this study had no cumulative records available and another 95 students had records that were lacking in any meaningful data.

It is true that the senior high school counselors who summarized the data from cumulative records for this study did not have unlimited time to search for records. However, it is doubtful that a counselor preparing for an interview with a student would have a great deal more time to search for records than was available for this study.

During the period of this study, there was a national hue and cry that student records in schools throughout the nation included far too much extraneous, damaging, and unnecessary material. The investigators in this study received the impression that this was not much of a problem in the Los Angeles Unified School District. In all too many cases, the records contained little or no material, damaging or otherwise.

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EXHIBIT A: Interview Form Used by Pupil Services and Attendance Counselors

Name (Last) (First)	School Code	Grade	Admin. Area	(Circle) 1 2 3 4 5	(Circle) 1 2 3 4 5 6	Unable to Locate ☐
Address	Phone	Age	DOB	(Circle) M F	Interview with (Circle) Pupil Parent Other	
Parent or Guardian	ATTENDANCE PROBLEM (Circle) Days Absent 5-10-15-20-25--More		NON ENROLLEE (Circle)		Date Last Attended Mo. Day Year	

REASONS FOR LEAVING/NON ATTENDANCE	Main	Added	PRESENT STATUS	FUTURE PLANS	IN SCHOOL	OBSERVATIONS
1. Academic Failure			1. Employed Full-Time	1. Return to School	1. Regular School	1. Living at Home
2. Reading Deficiency			2. Employed Part-Time	2. Seek Employment	2. Continuation School	2. Living Away From Home
3. No Interest in School			3. Unemployed	3. Enter Military Service	3. Adult School	3. Many School Transfers
4. School Behavior			4. Military Service	4. Enter Technical School	4. Regional Occupational Cntr.	4. Broken Home
5. Conflict w/Pupils			5. Probation or Y.A. Placement	5. Don't Know	5. Technical Schl.	5. Inadequate School Program
6. Conflict w/Sch. Personnel			6. Court Placement Outside Home	6. Continue Employment	6. Other_____	6. No Guidance Services
7. 18 Years or More			7. Married	7. Other_____		7. Prob. Supervision
8. Enroll Technical School			8. Project Furlough			8. Y.A. Supervision
9. Enter Military Service			9. Other_____			9. Referral to PSAC
10. Seek Employment						10. Other_____
11. Family Finances						
12. Home Problems						
13. Health						
14. Need of Clothing, etc.						
15. Marriage						
16. Pregnancy						
17. Juvenile Court Placement						
18. Other_____						

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EXHIBIT B: Cumulative Record Data Form Used by Senior High School Counselors

CUMULATIVE RECORD DATA FOR CHECK-OUTS AND PERSISTERS
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION BRANCH — FEBRUARY, 1974

For Office Use Only

1. Name _____ (Last / First / Initial) . . . . . 1. _____
2. School _____ . . . . . 2. _____
3. (Check) Male ___ Female ___ . . . . . 3. _____
4. (Check) Check-out ___ Absentee ___ Persister ___ Graduate ___ . . . . . 4. _____
5. Birthdate _____ (Mo. Yr.) Date of Check-out or Recording of Data _____ (Mo. Yr.) 5. _____
6. Number of Siblings: Older _____ Younger _____ Total _____ . . . . . 6. _____
7. Position in Family: Only ___ Oldest ___ Middle ___ Youngest ___ . . . . 7. _____
8. Grade Level (10.1, 10.2, 10.3, etc.) _____ . . . . . 8. _____
9. Grade Entered L. A. Schools (K, 1, 2, 3, etc.) _____ . . . . . 9. _____
10. School Months in this school (1 through 40) _____ . . . . . 10. _____
11. Senior High School Course of Study (Check) — Academic . . _____; Business Ed. _____; Art or Music _____; Home Economics _____; Industrial Arts _____; General Non-Acad. _____ 11. _____

TEST SCORES

12. Binet or Weschler IQ (after 4th grade) or Latest Group Test IQ _____ . . . . 12. _____
Grade level of test administration ___ Name of test _____
13. Latest Reading Score (preferably stanine) _____ . . . . . 13. _____
Grade level of test administration ___ Name of test _____
14. Last Elementary School Reading Score (preferably stanine) ___ . . . . . 14. _____
Grade level of test administration ___ Name of test _____

SEVENTH GRADE

		List number of marks in each category					For office use only			
		A	B	C	D	F	N	GP	GPA	
15.	Marks									15. _____
		E	S	U			N	GP	GPA	
16.	Work Habits and Cooperation									16. _____

LAST COMPLETE YEAR

		A	B	C	D	F	N	GP	GPA	
17.	Marks									17. _____
		E	S	U			N	GP	GPA	
18.	Work Habits and Cooperation									18. _____

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